

Gujarat temple attack

We condemn the hydra-headed terrorist monstrosity

ANY act of mayhem is an outrage against humanity. Yet, one that is perpetrated on a place of worship is infinitely more so. The reason for this extra bit of deprecation in the latter case is not only because it is an attack on a religious place but also for the height of irresponsibility demonstrated by way of overlooking the possibility of a backlash. Actually, it is in this perverse view deliberately taken of the possible consequences where the patently heinous nature of the crime lies. Whichever group did it in Gujarat is obviously no friend of any religion whatsoever. Their only agenda is to bring trouble, more trouble, blood-letting and more of it, upon innocent people.

We find no words strong enough to condemn the burst of gunfire and grenade attack upon Akshardham temple in Gujarat that left 30 devotees dead and 70 wounded. With the police using hailers to call for blood donations and as Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani's speech was being broadcast another powerful explosion rocked the temple site. The holed up militants held the devotees hostage, of whom 500 were rescued on Tuesday. Indian commandos were deployed to flush out the terrorists.

We are deeply concerned over this ominous development for the simple reason that Gujarat had been the scene of worst communal riots for three months since February taking a toll of at least 1000 people, most of them Muslim. Only a few days ago, there was communal violence in the state, and overall, the deep scars created on the minority community's mind are yet to heal. But the attack on the temple raises a spectre of fresh Hindu-Muslim violence in Gujarat. LK Advani has rightly urged the people of the state "not to be provoked by the attack" obviously making no short-shrift of the inherent risk factor. The Indian central government's continuing vigil would be of crucial importance at this juncture, because the state government's past role had received flak.

Once again we condemn the dastardly incident and express our sympathies for the bereaved families of the mayhem victims and those who have sustained injuries.

Long arm of criminals

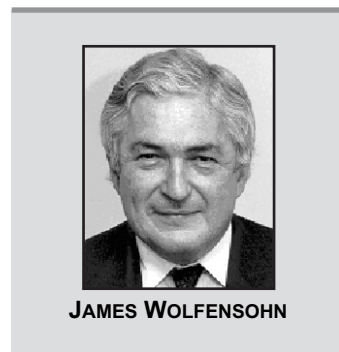
Being in prison seem to make no difference

YESTERDAY this paper carried a stunning story of how mobsters were carrying on their criminal activities from inside the prison. It was as if it did not make any difference where these gang leaders were staying. What it really means is that they have a wide network even inside the jail that makes them control the crime scene from wherever they are. It also means that these gangsters have such political links and they are so well protected that government projects still go to them even though they are in jail. Normally we speculate as to the power and influence of the criminals. But in our story yesterday we presented a current picture as to how things are happening today. We have pointed some specific government undertakings which have gone to the underworld. We have named those projects and detailed how things happened.

We now expect the government to immediately investigate and unearth the links that exists between the officials and so called business people who are working on behalf of the known criminals. We demand of the law enforcement agencies to dismantle the criminal network inside the jail that permits the happenings that we have reported yesterday. What worries us is the hold these criminals seem to have on our business and in turn, on our economy. If government jobs are forcibly manipulated to go to them then what will happen to the honest contractors? Either they will have to leave business or fall in line with the criminals to survive. In either case business will further get criminalised and our economy further pulled down.

We hope that comprehensive and effective actions will follow the publication of our reports.

Rich countries should lead on trade liberalisation



JAMES WOLFENSOHN

AS finance ministers gather in Washington this weekend for the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF their focus will be on implementing the historic compact between rich and poor nations that emerged from a year's worth of global summits in Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg. The agreement is simple: rich and poor countries have pledged to speed poverty reduction and progress towards the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, including urgent improvements in health and education levels for the world's poorest people. Action on trade is one of the best places to start.

At the World Trade Organisation summit in Doha last November, world leaders agreed that trade talks should focus on a "Development Agenda" addressing the

problems faced by poor people. But rich countries need not wait for the WTO ministerial meeting in Mexico next year to make good on their pledges. They can lead by example now by reducing tariffs, subsidies, capricious product standards, protectionist anti-dumping actions and other impediments to developing countries' efforts to compete in global markets.

way when it comes to trade.

Major trading nations have taken steps in the right direction. The U.S., Europe, Japan and Canada have adopted programmes to improve market access for exports from the poorest countries. There are encouraging signs in the recent passage of Fast Track Authority in the United States, and talk in Europe and the U.S. of addressing agricul-

ture. These are precisely the labour-intensive products that offer the first step up the technology ladder to developing countries. Tariffs and quotas for textile exports to developed countries cost developing countries an estimated 27 million jobs. Every textile job in an industrialized country saved by these barriers costs about 35 jobs in these industries in low-income

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tariffs in rich countries help confine Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire to the export of unprocessed cocoa beans; Uganda and Kenya to the export of raw coffee beans; and Mali and Burkina Faso to the export of raw cotton.

Agricultural subsidies in rich countries of about \$350 billion dollars a year -- nearly \$1 billion per day -- undercut poor farmers in

are often applied in ways that impose undue burdens on developing country producers and sometimes amount to underhanded protectionism. To meet EU standards, mango pulp processors in India must keep detailed records of each delivery from the small farmers who grow the fruit. Would it not be better to focus directly on quality standards instead? Meanwhile, anti-dumping actions hit especially hard at the small countries and small firms, who lack the deep pockets needed to demonstrate in court that they are not selling at less than the cost of production.

Developing countries are working hard to become more competitive and are eager to enter international market place given a fair chance to do so. I have heard this again and again in meetings with leaders of developing countries around the world. Give us market access, give us a level playing field for our products and goods, give us a trade partnership that is more than just in name. That is what these leaders and many others are saying. The world is watching to see how the leaders of the rich countries will respond.

Other non-tariff barriers -- standards and anti-dumping actions --

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Taking these steps won't be easy. Vested interests will try to protect the advantages they enjoy under the status quo. But the momentum for change is large and growing. Civil society groups that successfully pressed for action on debt reduction and landmines are insisting that developing countries receive a fair shake in the global market place. The United Nations, multilateral financial institutions, academic economists, and leaders of developing countries are all urging that rich countries show the

same respect. But there have also been recent and damaging setbacks, and there is still a long way to go. Now is the time to build on these pledges and partial initiatives by removing the remaining impediments to developing countries' participation in the global economy.

Tariff peaks -- exceptionally high tariffs on goods that poor countries are best able to produce, can be particularly pernicious. In the U.S. tariff peaks are concentrated on textiles and clothing; in Europe and Japan on agriculture, food and

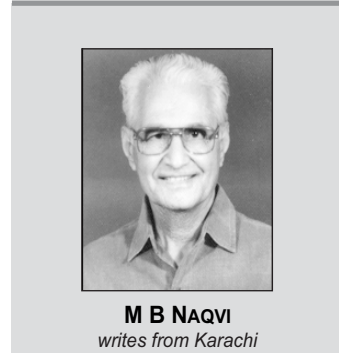
countries, where being a bread winner literally means putting bread on the table. Meanwhile, in the high income countries, tariffs on food and clothing raise prices, straining the household budgets of low-income families.

Escalating tariffs -- duties that are lowest on unprocessed raw materials and rise sharply with each step of processing and value added -- undermine manufacturing and employment in industries where developing countries would otherwise be competitive. Escalating

developing countries. These subsidies, which go mainly to large agribusiness corporations, are seven times the \$50 billion that these countries provide annually in foreign aid. Sugar prices in the U.S. and Europe are three times higher than in the world market due to subsidies and protection, to the detriment of low-cost producers such as Brazil. Does it really make sense to be subsidizing production of sugar beets in Northern Europe?

Other non-tariff barriers -- standards and anti-dumping actions --

Would no one say it is murder?



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

ISRAEL was humiliating and physically surrounding a trapped Yasser Arafat with tanks and soldiers and reinforcing it with intermittent cutting off of food supplies, water and electricity at the time of writing. This was the second arrest of the man. Who is Arafat? One is not mesmerised by him but Arafat is a globally recognised and elected leader of the West Bank and Gaza areas' Palestinians who are in Israeli occupation's thirty-sixth year. Israel recognises him and his Palestinian Authority -- a state of sorts.

The first question is why is Israel doing it? The official Israeli reply is that all its actions, including the killing of thousands of unarmed Palestinians so far and keeping the whole civilian population under strict and virtually indefinite curfew are driven by Israel's security. That it has destroyed Palestinians' careers, education, and prevented even the wounded being taken to hospitals is also to secure Israel. Israeli soldiers are mostly trigger happy, and, with a few honourable exceptions, have not hesitated in executing orders that cross the limits of all notions of law, humanity and canons of western civilisation.

It is now in order to compare Israeli Army with German SS troops of 1930s and 1940s, with appropriate changes of course, in terms of their attitudes and behaviour toward the 'other' and hated ethnic entity. Israelis will squirm and be angry at this; but their attitude on the question of their own security and the

differential value they attach to the lives of Israelis and Palestinians is redolent of the basic tenets of fascism. That the Jews were grievously persecuted by Nazis gives them no licence to oppress and persecute Palestinians. Israelis have morally delegitimised themselves.

Large questions arise. First, what are Ariel Sharon's designs? And who is responsible for gross

are to be asked about why do the suicide bombers sacrifice their own lives. Ordinary ideas about terror are centred on desperate criminals who will, in order to enrich themselves or to work out their grievances or grudges, kill others. The simple horror of such terror does not apply to modern day terrorism, the best example of which was 9/11 attack, though there was genuine

of Ottoman Empire that was wholly Arab from time immemorial. Most Israelis, despite their strength were and still are interlopers and trespassers in Palestine in the eyes of most Arabs and all honest and impartial men the world over who wish to preserve pluralism everywhere. If the Jews had a problem in Europe and America over their egregious persecution, as indeed

time the world finds out and prevents the sure-to-shock Sharon designs.

Which is where the US War on Terrorism comes in. Mr. Bush, like a Pathan tribal chief, is taking revenge against 9/11. He assumed that it was done by OBL and al-Qaida -- no matter why they did what they did -- he invaded a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Taliban were Islamic fanatics

The US President and his Foreign Minister Colin Powell have engaged in blatant arm-twisting of the UN. The UN was first required to pass a resolution threatening war on Iraq if it continued to refuse to unconditionally allow in international arms inspectors. When Saddam did just this, Bush turned round and said since Saddam Hussain is a liar and unreliable, the UNSC has now to pass a tough new resolution under the cover of which already mobilised US forces and with the informal permission of the hosts of the staging posts, he can launch the regime-change invasion of Iraq.

The raging and tearing hurry with which Bush is pushing his open-ended War on Terror by 'blackmailing' the UN has forced a man like Nelson Mandela to call the US a bully. The entire world has been shocked by Bush's recent behaviour. In Germany, Gerhard Schroeder could hang on to power only because he took a firm stand that he would not let German soldiers be killed in a war Bush wants. Jacques Chirac is against it. So are China and Russia, though the latter may later support, if Bush allows it a free hand in Chechnya. All Arab rulers were against it -- until the American arm-twisting and a convenient UN resolution-to-be helped change their stances.

The US is out to instal a satellite regime on Iraq. Why? Because Saddam is evil and a threat, although not even Bush can accuse him of any link with 9/11, OBL or Islamic fanaticism. Why then is he hellbent on war? It is easy to see that Saddam Hussain's suspected weapons threaten no one except Israel; or maybe Islamic zealots' view is to be given credence that America cannot allow a Muslim or Arab power to act independently. Or, perish the thought, the brouhaha is linked to oil, profits for corporate America and geopolitical advance by the US. Should the world meekly accept all this?

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

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violation of Palestinians' human rights? For all Sharon's personal hatred of Arafat, and his past conduct in Sabra and Shatila camps vis-à-vis Palestinians, he is not an independent agent. All know the secret of the outrageous Israeli behaviour: although Israeli armed forces are the strongest in the whole region, they are so because of American taxpayers' money, unlimited US political support and the money and influence of the Jewish Lobby in America. Ultimately, it is the US that is to be held responsible for the brutality and inhumanity that Israeli armed forces daily visit upon the defeated, occupied and unarmed Palestinians

There is that piffle about terrorism that is coming out of Israeli and American propaganda machines. It is mindless and foolish to insist that terrorism by the fanatics -- Palestinians, al-Qaida, Kashmiri Jihadis or LTTE suicide bombers -- has no cognisable cause. Anyway, it is so held by the world's sole superpower that terror as such is to be pursued no matter where and no questions

horror on the loss of 3000 innocent lives.

Let's tarry awhile on Israel's own conduct rather than move on to American actions. It is to be conceded that Israel happens to be stronger than all the Arabs put together. Indeed, its non-state forefathers were more influential before the First World War than all the Arabs put together, which is why UK agreed to create an ambiguous Jewish National Home in Palestine in 1917 in the teeth of Arab opposition. No point in enlarging on the proverbial perfidy of the Albion. Behind that British action was the need to mollify Zionists and the bad conscience of Allied Powers over their own domestic Jew-baiting. There was also the contempt of the Arabs. The basis of UN's sanctioning of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948 was the same factors bearing upon Allied Powers.

Since military force remains the arbiter of things, few ask questions about the grand larceny of the victorious Allied Powers in the Arab Palestine -- a recognised province

they had, their plight (then) should have been redressed in some other way. The UN had no business to do so at the cost of poor and weak Arabs.

The point is that Israel's right to be in Palestine has been reopened by Israeli state's egregious brutalities. History, all Arabs -- except the corrupt stooges of the west -- and honest people everywhere should now question it. Arab rulers have recognised Israel because of American might and so did a tired Yasser Arafat on the basis of Henry Kissinger's and Saudi rulers' false promises in 1970s. That he was and is being double-crossed by both Israel and the US has been obvious by Israel's procrastination in implementing all the peace agreements on the bogus and paranoid pleas of security. Israel knows Arab world poses no danger and most Arab potentates hate the Palestinians for their political consciousness and will never fight Israel for Palestinians' sake. Why then has Israel kept West Bank and Gaza Strip under its military occupation for 35 years? It is

like OBL and had given him sanctuary. So Bush effected a regime change and installed a nondescript Mr. Karzai in Kabul whose personal security in Kabul is Pentagon's problem. Thousands of innocent Afghans have been killed and more maimed; Afghanistan, already a strature case after 23 years of war, was destroyed some more.

The US was taking a preemptive action even in Afghanistan: OBL (probably) would mount more attacks in future. That's why his sanctuary and sanctuary-givers had to be destroyed. Later the US President George W Bush has adumbrated his "new" doctrine. The US has a right to take preemptive action -- 'before someone kills me let me kill him' -- against Saddam Hussain, the Iraqi dictator. Why? Because he is suspected of having WMDs (weapons of mass destruction) with which he might threaten the security of -- Israel's, who else's. Therefore let's get him -- and now.

That Bush is tearing up what international law has painfully been agreed upon, does not worry him.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Thank you, Minister Nazmul Huda

I sincerely thank Communication Minister Nazmul Huda for this laudable step of making it mandatory to use meter in 3-wheelers. This would indeed save the commuters from a lot of hassle and also a lot of their money.

After the ban on 2-stroke auto-rickshaws, the remaining auto-rickshaws were charging exorbitant rates and the passengers had no choice but to avail of it as there were a serious dearth of sufficient transport. The other day a CNG auto-rickshaw driver charged 60 tk to go to Dhanmodi from Karwan Bazar! Earlier it cost only 25-30tk.

I request Minister Huda to deploy police force on the main thoroughfares or set-up monitoring cell/complaint centre so that these unruly auto-rickshaw drivers can be tamed and the passengers have a place to seek respite from these 'rulers of the road'.

Thank you, once again Mr Minister and keep up the good work. Sharmin Chowdhury Lalmeta, Dhaka

Cricket and Bangladesh

Cricket is more than just a bat and the ball. It is also a matter of sheer skill, temperament, discipline, and state of mind. In all these departments, Bangladesh Team showed

woeful lack. September 23 match with New Zealand in Colombo was no exception. The result was predictable if not also pathetic.

It's not how many runs are scored or if the match was won or lost; what was painful to see was the seemingly utter lack of application overall. Lack of foot work, flashing at anything outside the off stump, a cavalier attitude with no regard to a game plan, and more-- all of these made one feel that almost each batsman was desperately trying to commit suicide, and succeeding too without any difficulty.

Maybe, it is time for a soul searching, or to put it simply, a time for re-thinking. To give enough time to do the required homework, Bangladesh will do well to take "time out" from international cricket to return only when we are good enough and it is time to do so. Why not start a cricket academy, be serious and make investment if we are to stay in the circuit with some honour. But only if that time is used with determination and discipline; tall talk and wishful thinking is no substitute for hard work. It is not patriotism to persist without the will and skill, to go to match after match without anything to show for it.

Giving up the Test status may be no shame; on the contrary by giving it up voluntarily will save further humiliation. Alliteratively, just give up the whole idea of international cricketing; that is no big deal and

there are many more worthwhile sports to excel in. It is not unpatriotic to know where your strengths are and what your priorities are and act accordingly. Will anyone listen please?

A cricket patriot Dhaka

"Finland's army and polite reply"

This is in reply to the letter by our European friend. I am sorry if I had offended him.

Nevertheless, pacifism is a very strong political factor all over Europe. The Bangladeshi fellow should read up on the manifesto of the Green party, allies of the Social Democrats who've just come to power again. Peace and non-violence is one of the prime principals of the Greens who now hold the key to power.

Every other European country also has strong pacifist parties. Every European country apart from the UK has also been cutting or not increasing their military budgets since the Cold War.

Please be rest assured that quite a few people in Europe dislike their armies. The premise that Burma is in any way whatsoever better off than us is so laughable that it isn't even worth commenting on. Please read up on Burma at the BBC's website (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/asia_pacific/country_profiles/

1300003.stm. I am sure you are a very learned man on military affairs, as I can see from your analysis of Burma (1), but my point was that the contributors to this debate, both for and against the issue are also quite well informed.

I am sorry to hear that you're sick of the corruption in Bangladesh and had to leave because you don't want to be a member of a corrupt society. Some of us do not have that luxury (or cowardice) and others like me chose to return and do our best here.

There are two types of immigrants my friend. One is the economic migrant, the flower sellers and peddlers in European cities, the taxi driver in New York and the investment banker on Wall Street. Although I would rather these people have stayed back in Bangladesh, I do respect their desire and need for economic betterment and opportunities. I have never met an immigrant from this category who doesn't miss home everyday of their lives and dream of making enough money to come back.

The second type is the migrant whose justification is that Bangladesh is too corrupt/dirty/disorganised/poor/diseased ridden etc. for them to live in.

For this second lot I have nothing but contempt. And you, my friend, seem to be nominating yourself for the second category.

Emile Dhaka Business ethics

I have noticed that most of the big business houses having tall buildings does not have parking spaces or have insufficient spaces. This is not expected from Nitol Group. A major portion of the road in front of the Nitol centre is occupied by a big number of their cars. Sufferers are the general public.

Why cannot they provide a good parking space? This is not good business ethics.

Fuad Hussain Dhanmodi, Dhaka

Different distinctions

I am mystified by certain portions of the published bio-data of the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University.

I had the idea that there is nothing above First Class at the University stage, not even a "star", and even the most outstanding students of all time had to be content, apart from the Class and the position, with only "credits" in the subsidiary subjects (for 75% to 100%). So what exactly was the "distinction" earned by the new VC in his Honours and M.Sc. Examinations?

I distinctly remember [no pun intended] reading about two years ago in the Letters column of The Daily Star the lament of one guardian unhappy about there being no

VC with a straight First Class record since Prof. Fazlul Halim Chowdhury more than twenty years ago. My congratulations to Professor Fayed if he had all four First Classes, and I will accept that as quite distinctive. But if the PRO used the word "distinction" as a euphemistic colloquialism for a lesser achievement, that would need to be distinguished appropriately.

Bazlur Rahman Dhaka

German elections

Generally we in Bangladesh only attentively follow a few foreign elections, usually India, the US and the UK.

But the elections just held in Germany may come to have greater ramifications on our economy than many others. This was the narrowest election in post war history and has re-elected the left wing Schroeder with his SPD and their allies the Greens. This unfortunate result will affect us in several ways. Germany is not just the engine of Europe; it is also a major trading partner for us as well.

Retail sales in Germany have been falling every year since the reunification. Growth of the sluggish German economy would come as a boost to our RMG industry. Schroeder's rival Stoiber of the CDU among other things would have implemented urgent labour law reforms. A CDU win would have

created more jobs, reduce unemployment and generally move Germany in a pro-business direction.

But now with Schroeder's lacklustre win, we can expect more of the same if not worse. A slow and weak German economy and an under performing European economy. Relations with the US will probably take a while to mend thanks to the short sighted decision by Schroeder to involve the Iraq issue in the election campaigns.

In sum, it is a sad result and one that both the German people and our RMG industry will rue. Gora Dhaka

"American way of life"

While I fully respect the views expressed in Ms. Selina Sultana's letter "American way of life" (although it would have been really wise if she would care to take a little more time to define an "American way of life"). But I am afraid that she has completely mixed up this vague/trivial issue with such complicated issues like terrorism/Osama bin Laden/Taliban. The truth is there is nothing called "American way of life" just as it wouldn't be wise either to say that there is a "Bangladeshi way of life", especially in this globalised world, in that we all humans beings, regardless of race/colour/ geographic location, have some common desires/ aspi-

rations in our lives. We all want to be happy in our lives...we all want money/wealth to make ourselves feel secured and comfortable, and to meet these basic human needs, people, from time to time, have travelled from one corner of the world to another.

Human minds always want to explore new things, but it wouldn't be wise to conclude that they like everything they explore or see. A way of life is just an idea...it is not about what things we do, but rather about how we do things. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in wanting to be a part of an "American way of life" while also rejecting the extremes of an "American way of life" at the same time. And as far as the question of dealing with terrorism is concerned, one must say that there are plenty of rooms for arguments over how the USA is handling the whole terrorism issue. To make it short, it would be rather inconsiderate of some one if he/she decides to shed light only one part of the story while totally ignoring the other parts of it. Therefore, those people--- trying to get a hold of US visas while opposing certain decisions of US government at the same time---are simply acting out of their consciousness and conscience, because they are more exposed to different kinds of views/prospects as opposed to Ms. Selina Sultana. Masud Nowsarul Abdullah Texas USA